

on which the film will be based, and has obtained commitments from actors and a director, he or she is ready to pitch again. This is the point at which a production manager might sign on. The producer must have a budget to know the amount of money to request. Producers who cannot or do not want to break down the screenplay or work out the budget themselves hire a PM to do this.

Independent nonunion production being what it is, producers usually try to find a PM who will do this free, in exchange for a guarantee that he or she will be hired as PM on the production once it has been green-lighted. Production managers who accept this deal should be sure to get it in writing. The agreement should spell out the amount of money owed to the PM for work on speculation. Without an agreement, no producer can actually guarantee that the PM will be hired. The financier might want to install a friend or relative in an important career position. The financier's nephew, for example, would love to have the PM credit, despite having neither the qualifications nor the desire to do the nitty-gritty work. Under such circumstances, the nephew might easily be made an associate producer, a credit typically given out for favors.

Assume a happy ending: the producer has all the talent desired, a final screenplay, and financial backing. A substantial amount of money has been advanced and is on account and ready to be drawn. The producer might even have distribution. In other words, it's a go! The production is now ready to move into preproduction.

Preproduction

Much of this book deals with work the PM must accomplish during preproduction. This includes screenplay breakdown, shooting schedule, location scouting, budget, casting and unions, permits, hiring staff and crew, unit supervision, permit clearance, equipment rental and stock, lab supervision, payroll service, insurance, postproduction preparation, and so on. Because these subjects are treated in greater detail later in the book, this section is quite brief. Figure 2.1 illustrates how the production team is organized and where the PM fits. The lines of authority and chain of command are indicated.

Production (Principal Photography)

Once all the preproduction tasks are complete, the film enters the production phase, during which the film is actually shot. The PM is responsible for a glitch-free shoot and must handle both logistics and overall organization.

If editing has already begun, the PM's responsibilities might include some postproduction work, such as dealing with digital special effects houses, the film lab, watching dailies, and possibly starting work on the soundtrack. The budget must be monitored according to the cash-flow chart; preliminary press work and public relations must be started. Together, the PM, in the production office, and the assistant director, on the set, are responsible for the flow of information. They must ensure that everyone involved with the production—staff, crew, and cast—knows what is going on, when, and where. The PM again coordinates and supervises the cooperation of the various units, as depicted in Figure 2.1.

The main action has shifted from the production office to the set or location. The assistant director is responsible for the flow and continuity of activities on the set. He or she keeps the PM informed on the status of the production and is responsible for the observance of union regulations, including timely

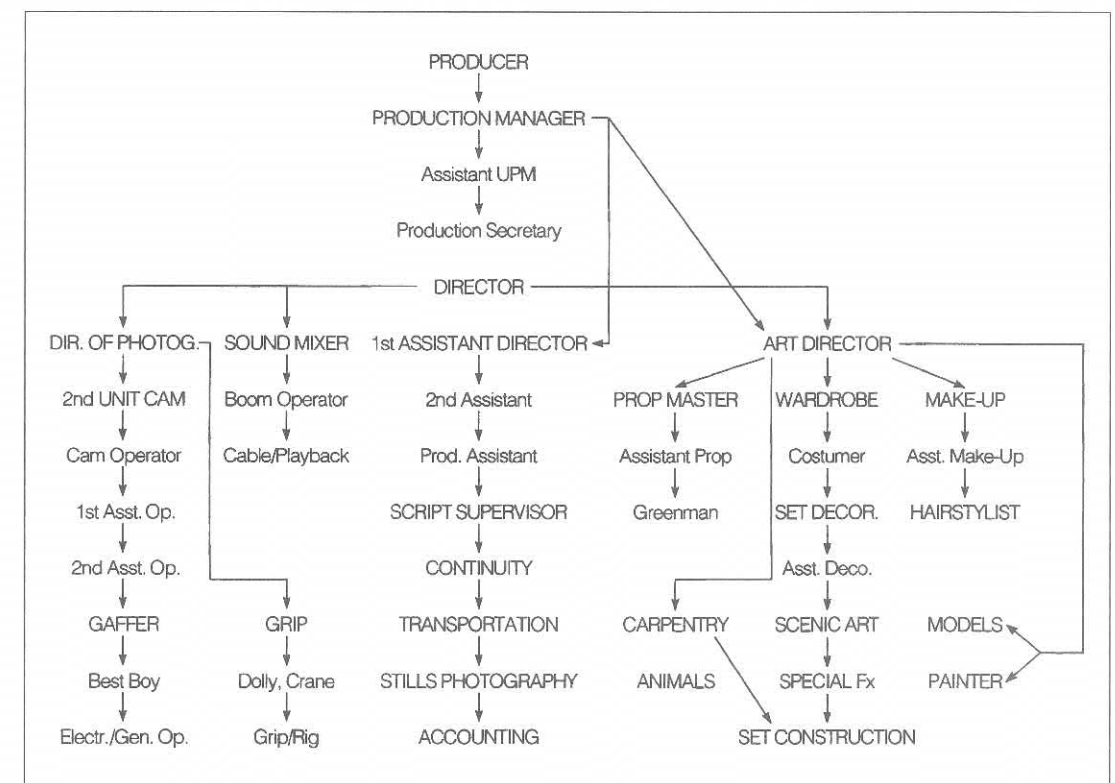


Fig. 2-1. Organizational chart of the motion picture production team for preproduction and principal photography.